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SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR G/TIP

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SUBJECT: MAURITANIA TIP DEMARCHE CABLE

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1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified, protect accordingly.
2. (U) Ambassador delivered reftel demarche, leaving the non-paper and the 2009 TIP report country narrative for Mauritania with MFA Secretary General Mohameden Ould Sidi Baba on June 15, 2009.
3. (SBU) After a review of the TIP process and the discussion of the release of the 2009 report in Washington, Ambassador underscored that the timing of the release of this year,s report was purely coincidental. He agreed that, from the Mauritanian perspective, it was particularly regrettable as it would very possibly coincide with planned June 16, 2009 ceremonies making the installation of a Government of National Unity and the end to Mauritania,s current political crisis.
4. (SBU) Welcoming Ambassador,s assurances that no unrelated political message was intended, Secretary General Sidi Baba cautioned that some Mauritians might see things differently and urged the Ambassador to weigh carefully any public remarks and to be vigilant against attempts to use the report and the reduction to Tier III as a political weapon. Ambassador noted that we shared similar concerns and said that the Embassy intended to handle the issue responsibly and had no wish to detract in any way from what promised to be a historic occasion with Mauritania,s return to constitutional order.
5. (SBU) Discussing possible sanctions, Ambassador noted that these were not applied automatically and the circumstances of each country would be considered. Secretary General Sidi Baba urged that Mauritania,s special situation be taken into account. He acknowledged that the political crisis and the reaction of Mauritania,s traditional partners had hampered government action in a number of areas. He insisted, however, that Mauritania remained committed to progress on human rights issues broadly and had "done the best it could" under exigent circumstances, citing the continuing return of refugees from Senegal and the "resolution of the passif humanitaire." Ambassador observed that the Embassy followed all of these matters very closely and would insure that any decisions would be based on a full appreciation of the facts on the ground.
6. (SBU) Comment: The timing of the release of this year,s report will be particularly unfortunate if the National Unity Government is in fact installed today as expected. In the short term, Mauritania will be able to do little to address its admittedly serious trafficking problems. In fact, the National Unity Government slated to

be in power through the scheduled July 18, 2009 elections, will be barred from initiating new programs through its Human Rights Commission. This measure, endorsed by members of the International Contact Group on Mauritania and including the US, was adopted to help insure that government programs were not politicized in the run up to elections. While it may not be able to make strong progress on specific trafficking issues, Mauritania's return to constitutional order and, in due course, to democratic rule are of fundamental importance to progress on the full range of human rights issues including trafficking. End Comment.

BOULWARE